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29 JUL 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Reconnaissance of Laos

1. The question has been raised as to whether Operations has an approval to overfly Laos at this time. A meeting of the COMOR held on 9 July states: "Inasmuch as Special Group approval already exists for coverage of North Vietnam and Laos, COMOR concluded that the target at Attopeu should be immediately forwarded to Operations for planning and acquisition as soon as feasible." COMOR based its statement on the NRO Monthly Forecast which indicated plans for coverage of Laos/North Vietnam based on a Special Group approval of 3 May 1963. If one goes back to the Special Group minutes of 3 May 1963 and reads paragraph 1, the minutes state coverage of Laos has been completed and that no further coverage is desired. Coverage of the Hanoi Basin was approved. The question arises: Are we violating the spirit of the Special Group approval by overflying Laos today without at least informing them through the Director of our intentions?

2. In order to resolve the question, I contacted [] who 25X1 related the following information: First, that Laos is a special case and should not be overflowed during the Harriman/Hailsham negotiations with Khrushchev. To further substantiate this, [] said that he had talked to Mr. Forrestal, who informed him that should the negotiations turn out to be successful, Mr. Harriman planned to surface the subject of Laos with Mr. Khrushchev to resolve that problem. [] suggested that we contact Mr. Scott of State Department regarding this matter. We put a call in to Mr. Clyde Snider in State, asking him to review the requirement for overflight of Attopeu in view of the above information. Mr. Scott stated that he would contact those concerned in State and let us know their reaction not later than Wednesday. He agreed unofficially that we should at least hold up on the overflight of Laos until he could resolve this problem within State. Should State Department consider that urgent coverage of Attopeu is still needed and that we commence operations as soon as feasible, we will inform the DCI of the facts mentioned heretofore and ask him to convey our intent to the Special Group for possible comment.

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3. COMOR in its requirement to have Laos and North Vietnam covered on a periodic basis stated for planning purposes that we could expect a requirement to exist in these areas every forty-five days. The last mission over Laos/North Vietnam was flown At the meeting on 18 July COMOR will probably levy specific requirements in Laos and North Vietnam and recommend coverage in early August subsequent to the Harriman negotiations.

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JAMES A. CUNNINGHAM, JR.
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